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January 22, 2008

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"Two and half years after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, we are still recovering and rebuilding in St. Bernard Parish," said Rep. Melancon. **"The media and people in Washington, D.C., often seem to forget that more than just our homes were damaged in the storms. Grants like these will help us rebuild our local government infrastructure and move further along the path to a complete recovery."**

The following grants were announced today:

- **St. Bernard Parish will receive \$1,050,307 for repairing damage to the Government Complex buildings.** High winds, heavy rains, storm surge and flooding from Hurricane Katrina damaged the Government Complex of St. Bernard Parish. This grant will reimburse the parish government for the cost of repairs to the roof, lighting, flooring, windows, electrical and communications systems of the Main Hall and the Meeting Hall of the Government Complex. The grant amount announced today is an increase from previous versions, and has been adjusted to match current market conditions. FEMA will pay 100% of the reimbursement costs, since the requirement for a local cost share was waived by legislation pushed by Congressman Melancon last year.

- **St. Bernard Port Harbor & Terminal District will receive \$1,011,322.73 to repair a building.** Building 170 of the St. Bernard Port Harbor and Terminal District sustained damage during Hurricane Katrina and flood waters reached three feet in the interior of the structure. This grant will reimburse the harbor and terminal district for repairs to the plumbing, roofing, ceiling and electrical and mechanical systems. The grant amount announced today is an increase from previous versions, and has been adjusted to match current market conditions.

- **The St. Bernard Parish Sheriff Department will receive \$1,496,788 to pay for the cost of utilities, water and waste removal for the office trailers and employee housing trailers provided after Hurricane Katrina.** High winds, storm surge and severe flooding caused by Hurricane Katrina destroyed the operational facilities of the St. Bernard Sheriff's office, as well as the homes of many Sheriff's Department employees. Previous FEMA grants provided for 10 office trailers and 200 residential trailers to replace the lost structures and help the Sheriff's department continue operations. However, the costs of utilities, water and waste removal were not included in those initial grants, and the FEMA Utility Subsidy Program for Essential Employees was created to reimburse parish governments for the cost of paying utility bills for essential government employees still working and living in temporary housing (i.e., FEMA trailers). Without this interim housing, employees would not have been capable of remaining in the Parish and reporting to work.

This grant will cover the cost of electricity, waste disposal dumpster rental, removal of sewage and delivery of potable water for the trailers. This grant will also cover electrical connections and generator costs for 50 units from January 12, 2007, to May 11, 2007, and sewer and water connection for 29 units.

The utility subsidy program was scheduled to expire in February of 2007, but Rep. Melancon was successful in extending the program until February 2008, by adding a provision to the Emergency Supplemental bill that was signed into law last May. Because of the extension, devastated parishes like St. Bernard will continue to be able to use this program as an incentive to encourage essential employees, such as law enforcement officers, to stay in the community and continue working for the parish. Rep. Melancon had previously introduced the bill H.R. 858 to extend the utility subsidy program for one year.

"These federal grants are stepping stones helping the people of south Louisiana rebuild their communities and regain their lives," said Rep. Melancon. **"I will continue to work in Washington to build support for federal grants like these, so we can continue to restore what was lost by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and the levee failures."**

Rep. Melancon continued, **"I will also continue fighting in Washington for stronger levees and more funding for flood mitigation to protect our homes, schools, and public buildings in south Louisiana from future storms."**

Rep. Melancon has worked in Congress to further reduce the financial burden on local governments in south Louisiana still struggling to recover from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Last spring, he worked with the Louisiana delegation and Congressional leadership to waive the 10 percent local government cost share requirement for disaster recovery projects and allow federal Community Disaster Loans to be forgiven for localities that can not afford to repay them.

Under the federal Robert T. Stafford Act, public assistance projects like those announced today required a 10 percent cost share from local governments upfront before the remaining 90 percent in federal grant money can be used. Many of the estimated 23,000 disaster recovery projects in Louisiana had been put on hold because local governments did not have the

resources to provide the match. The local match requirement has been waived 32 times since 1985 when per capita rebuilding costs have been deemed excessive, but had not yet been waived for Katrina and Rita.

Rep. Melancon worked with House leadership to include the waiver of the 10% match in the Iraq/Katrina Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill, which was passed by Congress and signed into law by the President at the end of May 2007. This bill provides a total of \$6.419 billion in hurricane recovery and relief funding for Louisiana and other Gulf Coast states.

In addition, Rep. Melancon successfully lobbied House leadership to include language in the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill making Katrina- and Rita-affected communities eligible for forgiveness of their Community Disaster Loans. An estimated \$1 billion in CDLs were provided by the federal government to hurricane-affected local governments immediately following Katrina and Rita to help them continue daily operations, such as payroll for law enforcement and emergency responders. Many local governments do not have the ability to repay this massive debt, as their tax bases were devastated by the storms. Rep. Melancon argued that, in the past, CDLs have been forgiven following many other major disasters, including Hurricane Andrew and the September 11th terrorist attacks. With the passage of the Supplemental, Katrina and Rita CDLs became eligible for forgiveness, taking a huge financial burden off of local governments in south Louisiana.

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